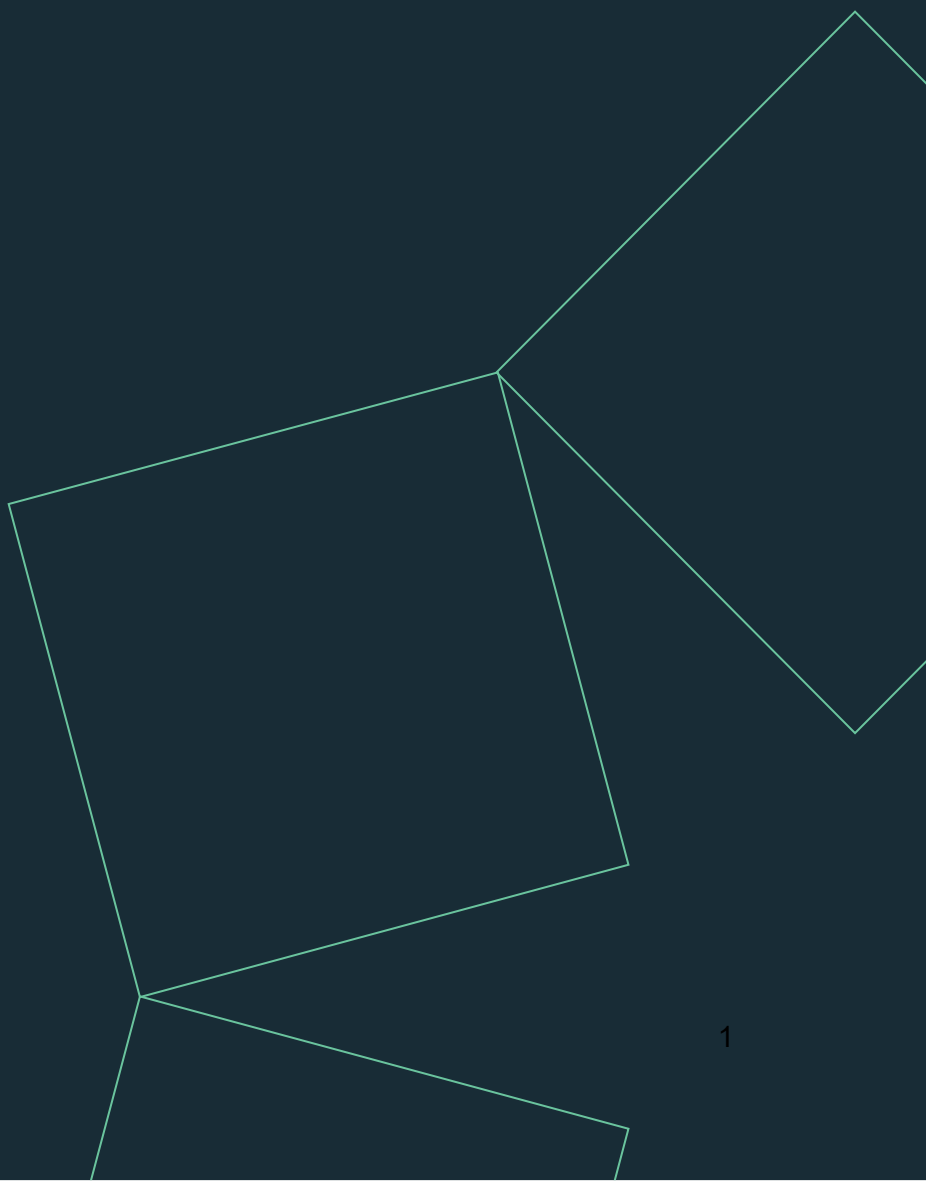
OFG Education

Behaviour Policy Best Practice Guidance



OFG Behaviour Policy Best Practice Guidance

Relational and Inclusive Behaviour Policy: Trauma-Informed and Neurodiversity-Affirming Practice

"You can't teach children to behave better by making them feel worse. When children feel better, they behave better."
Pam Leo

How to Use This Guidance

This guidance is designed as a practical support pack for leaders and staff teams. It should be used alongside the revised OFG Behaviour Policy, now titled the Relational and Inclusive Behaviour Policy: Trauma-Informed and Neurodiversity-Affirming Practice.

It is intended to help schools translate the policy into day-to-day practice, particularly within SEND settings where children and young people may communicate distress, unmet need, anxiety, sensory overload, trauma responses, communication differences or barriers to learning through their behaviour.

The guidance can be used for leadership discussions, staff briefings, INSET, reflective practice, supervision, behaviour policy implementation planning and team learning. It is not intended to be a script or a checklist, but a shared framework for thinking, responding and improving practice.

Contents Overview

1. Relational and Inclusive Behaviour Practice: The Essentials
2. Our Core Principles
3. What This Looks Like in Practice
4. Using Data Proactively
5. When a Child or Young Person Is Distressed or Needs Additional Support
6. Recognition and Rewards
7. Suspension, Exclusion and Reintegration
8. Practices to Avoid
9. Staff-Facing Two-Page Summary

Relational and Inclusive Behaviour Practice: The Essentials

This one-page summary captures the key messages staff should hold in mind when applying the policy in practice.

- Behaviour is communication and should be understood in context.
- Relationships are the foundation for safety, regulation, learning and change.
- High expectations remain important, but children may need different levels and types of support to meet them.
- Support should be proactive, individualised and informed by SEND, communication, sensory, learning and emotional needs.
- Adults regulate first and reflect later: safety, de-escalation and co-regulation come before problem-solving.
- Consequences should teach, repair and restore; they should not shame, punish or exclude from belonging.
- Data should be used proactively to understand patterns and adapt environments before behaviour escalates or additional support is required.
- Practice should be inclusive by design, with reasonable adjustments built into routines, teaching and environments.
- Children and young people should be asked what helps, what makes things harder, and how adults can support them to feel safe, included and ready to learn.
- Co-production should bring children, families and adults together so behaviour support is understood as part of a whole-community approach, not something done to children.

The core question is not, "What consequence does this child need?" but "What is this behaviour communicating, what support is needed, and how do we help the child repair, learn and succeed?"

At OFG, behaviour is understood as communication. Our person-centred, relational, trauma-informed and neurodiversity-affirming approach seeks to understand what sits beneath behaviour, support individual needs and teach the skills that help children and young people thrive.

Our philosophy is never based on punishment. It focuses on understanding, solutions, learning, accountability and repair, with high expectations and the right support to achieve them.

A non-sanctions-based approach still includes clear boundaries, accountability and consequences that preserve dignity and strengthen relationships.

Key Principles:

- **Behaviour is Communication**

Behaviour is often the visible part of a much bigger picture.

What we observe may reflect:

- Distress, anxiety or overwhelm.
- Educational trauma.
- Neurodivergent differences.
- Communication needs.
- Sensory needs.
- Difficulties with emotional regulation.
- Gaps in skills rather than motivation.
- Unmet emotional, social or learning needs.
- Relationship difficulties.
- Executive functioning challenges.
- Fear of failure or low confidence.
- Difficulties coping with transitions or uncertainty.

Behaviour should always be understood within the context of the individual child, their strengths, needs and environment.

Examples: What We See, What May Sit Underneath, What Could Help

What we see	What may sit underneath	What support could help
Refusing work, putting head down, saying "I can't" or leaving the task.	Literacy difficulty, fear of failure, processing delay, anxiety, demand overwhelm, previous educational trauma or unclear task expectations.	Chunk the task, reduce cognitive load, use visuals or examples, offer a supported first step, provide alternative recording methods, return to the task later if needed.
Leaving the classroom or moving around the room.	Sensory overload, social anxiety, need for movement, difficulty with transitions, reduced attention regulation or feeling unsafe in the environment.	Planned movement breaks, safe regulation space, transition warnings, visual timetable, sensory supports, trusted adult check-in and a clear re-entry plan.
Shouting, swearing or using hurtful language.	Emotional overwhelm, communication difficulty, limited emotional vocabulary, feeling misunderstood, masking fatigue or a trauma response to perceived threat.	Reduce language, use calm tone, validate feeling without accepting harm, offer communication alternatives, revisit later through restorative repair and emotional literacy work.
Refusing to join group	Social communication differences, anxiety, fear of peer judgement, previous	Offer structured roles, pre-teach expectations, provide a peer buddy, allow

work or social activities.	rejection, sensory overwhelm or uncertainty about role within the group.	alternative participation, reduce group size and build gradual confidence.
Becoming distressed during changes to routine.	Need for predictability, autistic processing differences, anxiety, difficulty with uncertainty or previous experiences of feeling out of control.	Use now-and-next boards, visual schedules, social stories, advance warning, transitional objects, clear adult reassurance and predictable recovery time.
Repeated incidents at a particular time, lesson or location.	Environmental mismatch, sensory demands, curriculum access issue, relationship difficulty, fatigue, hunger, transition stress or unmet regulation need.	Review patterns in data, observe context, adapt timetable or environment, increase proactive regulation, support staff consistency and review individual support plans.

- **High Expectations and High Support**

We do not lower expectations.

Instead we:

- Maintain clear boundaries.
- Explicitly teach expectations.
- Model positive behaviour and relationships.
- Make reasonable adjustments where needed.
- Provide support before distress escalates.
- Help children and young people experience success.

High expectations remain important. The support required to achieve those expectations may simply look different for different children.

- **Relationships are Fundamental**

Positive relationships sit at the heart of effective behaviour support.

Children learn best when they feel safe, connected and understood. Strong relationships support emotional regulation, increase engagement and create the conditions required for positive behaviour change.

Relational and Inclusive Practice Does Not Mean…

- No boundaries.
- No accountability.
- No consequences.
- Accepting unsafe behaviour.
- Ignoring the impact on others.
- Excusing harmful behaviour.
- Lowering expectations.

Relational and Inclusive Practice Does Mean...

- High expectations alongside high support.
- Curiosity before judgement.
- Understanding behaviour in context.
- Teaching skills rather than demanding compliance.
- Making reasonable adjustments where needed.
- Repairing relationships.
- Supporting regulation before reflection.
- Helping children move forward successfully.

Create Inclusive-by-Design Environments

Behaviour support should not begin only once a child is distressed or additional support is required.
The most effective schools design predictable, accessible and relationally safe environments that reduce stress, strengthen belonging and make success more likely.

This includes:

- Predictable routines.
- Clear and accessible communication.
- Sensory-aware environments.
- Strong relationships.
- Opportunities for movement and regulation.
- Consistent adult responses.
- Reasonable adjustments informed by need.
- Explicit teaching of behaviour and emotional regulation skills.
- Proactive support rather than reactive intervention.

Using Data Proactively

Inclusive-by-design environments are informed by data, daily observations and pupil voice.

Schools should regularly ask:

- What is the data telling us?
- Are there patterns emerging?
- Are particular lessons proving difficult?
- Are incidents increasing at certain times of day?
- Are there environmental factors contributing?
- What can we change proactively?

For example:

- Increased incidents on Friday mornings may indicate timetable fatigue, reduced engagement or a need for additional regulation opportunities.
- Behaviour occurring during one curriculum subject may highlight a need for differentiated teaching, staff support or curriculum adaptation.
- Distress during transitions may indicate a need for increased preparation, visuals or adult support.

- Behaviour occurring predominantly during social times may indicate a need for increased structure, supervision or supported social opportunities.

The aim is to move from:

"What's wrong with this child?"

To

"What is this pattern telling us and what can we put in place to support success?"

Data should be reviewed through multiple lenses, including protected characteristics, so schools can identify patterns, remove barriers, make reasonable adjustments and reduce the risk of discriminatory or disproportionate responses.

Co-Production, Pupil Voice and Whole-Community Alignment

Relational and inclusive behaviour practice is strongest when it is developed with children and young people, rather than simply delivered to them. Children should be asked what helps them feel safe, connected, regulated and ready to learn, as well as what can make things harder.

For many children in SEND settings, behaviour support will be more effective when adults understand the child's communication preferences, sensory profile, trusted relationships, triggers, strengths and recovery needs. This means actively seeking their views in ways that are accessible and meaningful to them.

Co-production might include:

- Asking children and young people what helps them when they are becoming overwhelmed.
- Using visuals, symbols, scaling, drawing, social stories, communication aids or supported conversations to gather views.
- Inviting children to help shape their individual support plans, regulation plans or re-entry plans.
- Reviewing what worked after an incident once the child is calm and able to contribute.
- Asking children what adults do that helps, and what adults do that can unintentionally escalate distress.
- Involving families and key adults so support is consistent across home, school and wider contexts where appropriate.

This work is also about aligning adults. Children need the whole community around them to understand the shared approach and respond consistently. This includes teachers, teaching assistants, leaders, therapists, pastoral staff, site teams, transport teams, families and wider professionals where relevant.

When adults are aligned, children experience predictability, safety and belonging. The aim is to bring everyone into the same whole-community understanding: behaviour is communication, support is proactive, repair is relational, and every child remains a valued member of the school community.

Reflective questions for teams include:

- Have we asked the child what helps?
- Have we asked what makes things harder?
- How has the child's voice shaped the plan?
- Do all adults know the agreed approach?
- Are we responding consistently across lessons, transitions, social times and wider routines?
- How are families being included in a way that feels collaborative and supportive?

Team Reflection and Learning

Creating an inclusive culture requires ongoing reflection.

Schools should establish regular opportunities for teams to:

- Reflect on behaviour patterns and trends.
- Explore what is working well.
- Identify preventative strategies.
- Consider environmental factors.
- Learn from incidents.
- Share effective practice.
- Reflect on their own responses and practice.

Questions might include:

- What might this behaviour be communicating?
- What might we be missing?
- What support does this child need?
- What worked well?
- What can we do differently?
- What systems or environmental changes could help?

Reflective discussions should focus on curiosity, learning and continuous improvement rather than blame.

When a Child or Young Person Is Distressed or Needs Additional Support

Practical Response Pathway

Stage	Adult focus	What this may look like in SEND practice
Safety	Reduce risk and maintain emotional and physical safety.	Move other pupils calmly, reduce audience, use known safety plans, avoid crowding, keep language minimal and predictable.
De-escalation	Lower emotional intensity and reduce demands.	Use a calm tone, offer simple choices, reduce sensory input, pause instruction, avoid public correction and give processing time.
Co-regulation	Help the child return to a more regulated state.	Offer movement, sensory support, quiet space, trusted adult presence,

		visual prompts, grounding activity or preferred calming strategy.
Reflection	Only once regulated, explore what happened and what was needed.	Use visuals, drawing, scaling, emotion cards, communication aids, short conversations or written prompts depending on need.
Repair	Support accountability, restoration and relationship repair.	Repair the environment, restore resources, practise alternative communication, offer a supported apology or contribute positively to the affected space or person.
Re-engagement	Help the child return to learning and belonging successfully.	Provide a clean slate, adapted task, supported transition back, check-in plan and reduced barriers to re-entry.

Post-Incident Reflection and Learning

Post-incident reflection and learning should only happen when everyone is ready.

As the saying goes:

"Strike when the iron is cold."

Children learn best when they feel safe, regulated and connected.

Reflection should be individualised, non-shaming and focused on:

- What happened?
- What was difficult?
- What support was needed?
- What can help next time?
- How can any harm be repaired?

The goal is always learning and future success rather than blame or punishment.

Natural and Logical Consequences

Natural and logical consequences maintain safety, support learning, repair harm and help children understand impact in a way that is fair, proportionate and connected to what happened.

They help children and young people:

- Understand the impact of their actions.
- Develop responsibility.
- Build life skills.
- Repair relationships.
- Learn more effective ways of meeting their needs.
- Experience accountability in a supportive manner.

Consequences should always be:

- Linked to what happened.
- Fair and understandable.
- Developmentally appropriate.
- Delivered with empathy.
- Focused on safety, learning, repair and future success rather than punishment.
- Designed to support future success.

Ask Yourself

Before implementing a consequence:

- Is it linked to the behaviour?
- Does it support learning?
- Does it maintain dignity?
- Does it support accountability?
- Does it repair harm?
- Would it make sense to the young person if explained?

If not, it may be a punishment rather than a logical consequence.

Examples of Natural and Logical Consequences

Natural and Logical Consequences: SEND-Focused Examples

Situation	Response to avoid	Relational and logical response
A pupil throws resources during sensory overload.	Public reprimand, loss of break or expecting immediate apology while dysregulated.	Support regulation first, then help restore the area, check sensory triggers and plan an alternative way to communicate overload next time.
A pupil refuses writing because the task feels inaccessible.	Insisting on completion in the same format or describing the pupil as non-compliant.	Explore barriers, offer scribing, voice recording, sentence starters or reduced written demand while maintaining the learning intention.
A pupil leaves class due to anxiety or overwhelm.	Chasing, blocking exit, shaming on return or removing already-earned recognition.	Use the agreed safe plan, check in once calm, identify triggers and agree a supported re-entry routine.
A pupil uses unkind language towards a peer.	Demanding an instant apology or using a generic sanction.	Support both pupils, explore impact once regulated, practise alternative language and agree a meaningful repair action.

A pupil damages school property during distress.	Focusing only on blame or cost.	Restore or repair where possible, identify what led to the distress and update the support plan to reduce future risk.
A pupil struggles repeatedly in a particular lesson.	Repeated consequences without adapting the provision.	Review curriculum access, sensory demands, relationships and timing; adjust teaching, environment or support before the next lesson.

Restorative Repair

Repairing relationships is often the most important consequence.

This may include:

- Meaningful apologies.
- Restorative conversations.
- Opportunities to rebuild trust.
- Collaborative problem solving.
- Acts of positive contribution.
- Planning for future success.

The goal is not to make children "pay" for mistakes but to help them understand impact, repair harm and move forward successfully.

Recognition and Rewards

Recognition should focus on:

- Effort.
- Growth.
- Personal achievement.
- School values.
- Positive relationships.
- Acts of kindness.
- Resilience and perseverance.

Best practice includes:

- Specific praise.
- Individualised recognition.
- Unexpected positive feedback.
- Celebrating progress rather than perfection.
- Sharing successes with families.

Rewards should never be removed once earned and should not be used as sanctions.

Attendance

Attendance should never be considered in isolation from a child's underlying needs.

Rather than rewarding attendance alone, schools should:

- Understand barriers.
- Work collaboratively with families.
- Reduce obstacles to attendance.
- Celebrate progress and engagement.

Suspension and Permanent Exclusion

Suspensions and exclusions are always viewed as a last resort and should never be understood as punishment.

They are protective actions used when safety has been compromised or when time is needed to ensure the environment is safe and ready for successful reintegration.

Where a suspension occurs, schools should adopt a relational response focused on four areas:

Understanding

- What happened?
- What sat beneath the behaviour?
- What factors contributed?
- What support is required?

Making the Environment Safe

- Reviewing risk.
- Adapting support plans.
- Implementing reasonable adjustments.
- Ensuring staff have support and guidance.

Repairing Relationships

- Rebuilding trust.
- Supporting those affected.
- Providing restorative opportunities.
- Reducing future harm.

Planning for Successful Reintegration

Before return, consider:

- What needs to be different?
- What support needs to be in place?
- What has been learned?
- How will success be supported?

Success should not be measured by whether a child has experienced a consequence.

Success should be measured by whether the child, family and school are better prepared for a successful return and reduced future risk.

Practices to Avoid

The following approaches are not aligned with OFG practice:

- Punitive consequences unrelated to the behaviour.
- Public behaviour charts or ranking systems.
- Public shaming or humiliation.
- Removing already-earned rewards.
- One-size-fits-all approaches.
- Threatening language.
- Responses which fail to consider individual need.
- Focusing solely on compliance rather than learning.

Remember

All children need:

- Belonging.
- Safety.
- Strong relationships.
- Clear boundaries.
- Accountability.
- Opportunities to learn.
- Adults who remain curious and compassionate.

Our role is not simply to manage behaviour.

Our role is to understand, teach, support, regulate, repair and help children and young people develop the skills they need to succeed in education and beyond.

Final Reminder

Stay curious. Behaviour is communication, and our first task is to understand what sits beneath it.

Regulate before reflecting. Safety, de-escalation and co-regulation come before problem-solving, learning or repair.

Teach, support and repair. Consequences should be logical, restorative, proportionate and connected to what happened.

Use data to adapt the environment. Patterns help us remove barriers, make reasonable adjustments and prevent distress escalating.

Keep every child connected to belonging. High expectations and high support should help children and young people return to learning, relationships and community with dignity.